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JAPAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORLD WAR

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The world wonders how deeply, and in what way, Japan is interested in the war. A somewhat widespread impression concerning this country is that, though one of the Allies, she is, at heart, consciously in favor of the German cause. If this idea be correct, Japan is, then, a believer in the Teutonic philosophy that "might makes right;" such being the case, we have, without seeking further, a sufficient explanation of Japan's somewhat passive policy since the expulsion of Germany from the Far East, and, in general, a clear indication of her future course.

Judging from the sentiments of representatives of many Japanese business people, this impression is not correct. Japan is not so thoroughly imbued with the "will to power" as to be dead to justice; but she is aware of the fact that, as the world is constituted today, might is necessary to insure justice. Herein is cause for keenest approbation and gravest foreboding. At present, justice, political and economic—to herself, is Japan's watchword. She would be just to others, but others will see to that. Japan must make sure that she secures the possibilities of unrestricted national growth which the other first-class powers possess. Whatever be the outcome of the war, Japan will be in a difficult situation. She must prepare for intensely sharp competition.

These conclusions are the result, in part, of general impressions, but, chiefly, of many frank answers to questions asked of various Japanese with the stated purpose of ascertaining the Japanese viewpoint.

Turning to the concrete sources just alluded to, we find that, of the people questioned as to their acceptance of the doctrine that "might makes right," but few answered that

they thought right to be the inevitable result of might. Among this number were three lieutenants in the army, each one of whom quite frankly stated his belief in the principle as advocated by Germany: "If Germany can win who shall be able to prove that Germany was, or is, wrong?" The others standing for this idea, were young men from the commercial class.

The arguments used by these followers of Prussian thought were the usual ones—now so well known that they need scarcely be mentioned. "The flesh of the weak . . . becomes the food of the strong" in all walks of life; this is true in economic activities when the struggle is between man and man; it is also the fact, in the comparatively humane fight of everyday life, or, in the terrible clash of arms, where group is pitted against group.

It must be remembered, however, that the attitude of this minority does not place them on the side of Germany. They believe that "might makes right," for the Allies, just as well as for Germany. And, as they are on the side opposite Germany, they naturally prefer that victory should crown the efforts of Japan and of her friends.

The attitude of the men opposed to adherence to the barbarous faith in brute force, is more pleasing; for they have a conception of justice in the abstract. They favor the defeat of Germany, not only because they are connected with the enemies of the central powers, but because they believe the Teutons have become unbalanced by too much of their backward philosophy, and, hence, are a menace to the future.

We are acquainted with the arguments used by this majority. Righteous might succeeds; but unjust might fails at last. Power, which would injure the mass of people, must be suppressed. Brute force is not might. In order to "make right," not only is perfect physical and intellectual education necessary, but also, excellent moral education. Might itself is neither good nor bad; the difference depends upon the man who has it. There is a "great freedom," a "great right" which God gave us, which human beings can never change.

Thus neither those advocating brute force, nor those opposing it, can be said, because of their inclinations, to be, even at heart for Germany.

I have pointed out that Japan is not in favor of Germany, also, that Japan is not insensible to a broad, humanitarian sense of justice; I have said that she is unalterably desirous of making sure, now, in the hour of her great opportunity, that the solid foundation of a lasting, national, economic and political power is laid for the little Island Empire of the Far East. There is a danger that this self-preserving spirit degenerate into mere selfishness. I shall not attempt to designate the place where, in such a world-turmoil, occasioned by the forces of growth and decay, justifiable national self-protection, in the case of a new-old country such as is Japan, merges into a mean and despicable lack of a sense of an elevated, international social-consciousness. I shall try merely to point out the state of public opinion.

However, in Japan, public opinion should not be regarded, to the same degree as in America, as indicative of the course of future events. Japan is bureaucratic, not merely in name, but in fact. Public opinion is in accordance with the desires of the great political leaders in power. For example, the Mombusho forbade the participation in any way of Imperial University students in politics; as a result, not only do such men speak and write nothing about the supreme international problems of the hour, but they have absolutely no personal interest in these affairs. The theory was promulgated that the thing of supreme importance for Japan is economic supremacy; forthwith, the energies of the whole nation were turned upon commercial and industrial matters. When it becomes plain to the leaders, as it will some day, that sake, the national drink, is seriously detrimental to the efficiency of labor, a decree will be sent forth, and intoxicating drinks will vanish almost in a day. When the rulers come to feel that economic interests ought to be subordinated, the united efforts of the subjects will instantly turn to that which is indicated to them as being most important. Japan is not democratic, hence, public opinion reflects the

present mind of those high in authority, rather than serving as a criterion for the future.

The condition of public opinion shows that, whatever else may be true of Japan, she is not pro-German; she is not dead to justice; she is particularly determined that Japan—which has always, heretofore, been much at the mercy of others, shall, henceforth, be as nearly self-sufficient as any people in this stage of history can be. Japan must see that justice shall be done to herself in the coming years, for she knows that no other country can do that for her. This should be kept in mind when discussing Japan's past conduct in the war and her future policy.

But what in detail is Japan's attitude? Why has not this nation done more?

In the first place, there are a few Japanese who deprecate the fact that Japan has done no more. One man cannot understand why his country has done so little. Another says the people have grown indifferent. Some affirm that the land is in a chaotic state—every politician being inconstant. Others believe that men are sleeping among their bags of newly acquired riches—having lost all desire to fight, except for personal gain.

Again, occasionally, a man upon being questioned springs to the defensive—saying that Japan has not made great wealth, or, that she has no ambitions territorially.

The vast majority among the common people firmly contend that Japan has done her best; and that that best has been more than duty demanded. This leads us to the consideration as to why the Japanese entered the war and what they have conceived to be their duty since becoming a part of the anti-German forces.

The consensus of opinion is that Japan entered the war solely on account of the Anglo-Japanese treaty and to keep peace in the Orient. If it had not been for the Alliance, Japan would have had no part in the war. Consequently her moral duty to the Allies has been bounded by her treaty-obligations; her duty as concerns herself has been circumscribed only by the opportunities offered through this peculiar peace in the Orient, for her own economic develop-

ment and expansion. These conclusions are supported by various statements, in substance to the effect that, according to the terms of the Alliance, Japan was to coöperate with England, in the East, from the Indian Ocean; but, in sending her destroyer-flotilla to the Mediterranean Sea, she has gone far beyond the scope required. Therefore she does not acknowledge that she ought to have done more in the war. Again: having accomplished her great mission in the Orient, she has found little reason for sending her soldiers abroad. Germany having been driven from the Far East, Japan had no more obligation to continue fighting aggressively. Japan could not be expected to take such an important part as the East Indians, for Japan is an independent state, and has a very important duty in Asia. England, Germany, Russia and the United States will all be powerful at the end of the war; hence Japan prepares against that time, rather than exert herself further as an active belligerent.

Other reasons, relatively unimportant, are heard. The Allies have not liked the idea of Japanese help. The Japanese soldier would be less mighty in Europe, and he is accustomed only to short wars. It would have been an insult to the Allies for Japan to send troops—so many nations in the west ought surely to cope successfully with the enemy! Japanese soldiers in Russia would have given rise to contention. Japanese and European tactics differ; those of the one are positive, those of the other negative—hence, the Japanese could not have worked harmoniously in Europe. Japan loves peace. The Allies have been fighting successfully and have been satisfied without further aid from Japan.

There remain a few causes for past inactivity which seem most vital to this leading nation in the Orient. Certain drawbacks of nature, such as distance, climate, language, customs, habits, food, and the like, have seemed insurmountable. Japan has been too poor in money, ships and armies to exert herself more vigorously. Greater activity might have interrupted Nippon's prosperity. The utter crushing of Teutonic power has not seemed necessary. The

complete demolition of militarism has not been deemed essential; a certain amount of it is necessary—hence, permanent peace is impossible—since economic competition, which always leads to armed conflict, is unavoidable.

A broad, humanitarian idealism is conspicuous by its absence in these answers to the query as to why Japan has not shown more military energy in the great war. Nevertheless in the light of the evidence of a keen sense of justice, as noted in the first part of this article, I am inclined to believe that the broad sense of international rights has of necessity been subdued—rather than lost—in the face of the exigences resulting from and accompanying the present national condition of Japan. Has the time come for Japan to rouse herself from this justly self-centered attitude, and, with her newly acquired strength, to assume once again, and, even more vigorously than at first, the rôle of an active participant in the struggle for freedom? A consideration of the replies to the question as to Japan's future policy may shed some light on the subject.

A tabulation of the opinions coming to my notice at first hand brings out several significant points. Approximately 33 per cent of these expressions as to Japan's future policy are in favor of actively helping the Allies. However, only 19 per cent of this 33 per cent take the stand that help should be primarily by the national army and navy; 48 per cent are non-committal as to the method of helping; 33 per cent desire to aid by economic means—the furnishing of money, weapons and the like.

Approximately 41 per cent of the total indications relative to Japan's future in the war are decidedly nationalistic. Fifty-six per cent of this 41 per cent wish Japan to husband all her resources for the terrific economic fight unavoidably coming after the war. Twenty per cent desire a greatly extended military programme for self-protection and to enable her to hold her predominance in the East. Five per cent would turn all efforts toward the sharpening of the national diplomacy and the perfecting of the government. Ten per cent frankly look upon China and the South Sea Islands as legitimate fields for extended effort—now that the

other powers are busy elsewhere. Seven per cent propose simply to look on at the war. Two per cent maintain that, unless there is prospect of large spoils after the war, Japan cannot cause her many fine youths to be slaughtered in the conflict.

The remaining 26 per cent of the total may be variously interpreted. Of this 26 per cent 38 per cent see Japan's duty to be the keeping of peace in the Orient and a kind of balance of power. Ten per cent favor a Japanese Monroe Doctrine. Twenty-one per cent believe help must be given China. Three per cent would help Siberia. Twenty-eight per cent foresee that Japan can assist no more on account of the ban by the United States on the export of steel.

Thus, approximately, we find that of the opinions dealt with 33 per cent are positively altruistic, 41 per cent are decidedly self-centered, while 26 per cent may be read in either way.

It would seem, therefore, that Imperial Japan is not yet ready to thrust herself into the war for the sake of democracy as unreservedly as the other members of the Alliance have done. Whether this is because of a necessary self-projecting process, as legitimate as have ever been the noblest efforts of other peoples in process of making sure their places in the world, or, whether it is tending to what is, in a deep sense, an anti-social end, is difficult to say. On the one hand, is the fact that Japan is not yet developed as thoroughly, in as many lines, as are the other leading opponents of Germany; on the other hand, the last years have brought her unparalleled prosperity. Japan must develop herself, and for this purpose needs continued prosperity.

The statistics given have been chiefly drawn from unofficial representatives of ordinary business and commercial men. The better class of the common people do not, however, as a rule, differ fundamentally in political sentiments from the rest of the masses of any nation; and the units of a group usually follow their leaders. Hence, what has been learned should be fairly representative. It is of further

significance that the results of this study substantiate remarkably well the general impression any open-minded foreigner obtains who has lived in Japan during the past few years.

The close observer must, I believe, agree that the vital question in regard to Japan is not as to any premeditated, pro-German tendency, nor yet as to any lack of a sense of justice in the abstract; such ideas need cause no alarm. But it is of the utmost moment whether or not, in striving with such eagerness for the greatness that may well be, and ought in time to be, hers, Japan's self-regarding spirit shall degenerate, and lose for her the very goal she seeks.